Massimo Fagioli

Death Instinct and Knowledge



Excerpts

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L'ASINO D'ORO EDIZIONI

Presentation

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The author

The book *Death Instinct and Knowledge*, written in 1970 and published in January 1972, has not only revolutionized the life of its author, the Italian psychiatrist Massimo Fagioli, but it has also profoundly changed the panorama of contemporary Italian culture. After his training period in the psychiatric hospitals of Venice and Padova, he worked in Ludwig Binswanger's famous clinic in Switzerland directing the therapeutic community. Fagioli wrote *Death Instinct and Knowledge* as the conclusive work of his psychoanalytical training. This is why the book is written in a way that combines psychoanalytic terminology and language accessible to all. According to the author himself, he was also motivated to write this book, which brings together discoveries and thoughts that he had been elaborating for a while, when he realized that the revolt of 1968 was undergoing a self-destructive turn. As a well-respected and highly esteemed therapist he had to face the psychiatric consequences of the umpteenth failed rebellion with increasing frequency. His critical position towards Freud, Klein

and Bion soon became an explicit and well documented rejection. In 1976, the second edition of *Death Instinct and Knowledge* and the two books that followed – a real and proper theoretical trilogy whose contents found no place within the Freudian universe – gave spontaneous rise to the a series of seminars held at the University of Rome, with an ever-increasing number of participants: it was the beginning of the so-called "Collective analysis".

Today *Death Instinct and Knowledge* has been disseminated in tens and thousands of copies reaching its twelfth edition. It represents the theoretical and methodological basis of Fagioli's clinical activity before and after the beginning of the Collective analysis which he has conducted without interruption for more than 30 years. A consistent number of psychiatrists and clinical psychologists that operate within the Italian public health system base their work on these books.

The book

The first chapter deals with the problem of absence, taking its lead from the well known theme of "the therapist's vacations". The basic assumptions are: "The patient fears the absent therapist, not the present one", and: "One can be physically present but absent in a psychiatric sense. Absent, that is, in the interpersonal relationship".

What happens when the therapist is absent? Fagioli demonstrates, step by step, how a patient tends to become more "aggressive" than the therapist who seems to be abandoning the patient. "Becoming more aggressive" does not however realize itself in a very conspicu-

ous way, say by physically assaulting the other person, but with a change in one's interior make-up, which may remain altogether invisible. A sort of interior blackout in which the other and one's relationship with the other is not "repressed" but brought to a complete disappearance. He called this dynamic the "annulment drive". Its consequences can be disastrous if the object which is made to disappear has libidinal relevance: such as the therapist or when a family member leaves or dies. It is even possible to reach a state of utter emptiness or psychic fragmentation.

In an altogether original way Fagioli links the annulment drive to the concept of the death instinct, measuring himself with Freud's famous work of 1920. However, Fagioli's concept of the death instinct as an annulment drive has nothing to do with the sadism and material destruction which are for Freud the only forms of aggression conceivable. In Fagioli's thinking, the death instinct is viewed as the omnipotent creation of a non-reality, which also means that certain aspects of the external reality are annulled in the unconscious mind.

The chapter ends with the treatment of a young schizophrenic patient, considered a new paradigm in the psychotherapy of severe psychosis. What stands out in this case description, as well as in the other chapters of the book, is Fagioli's capacity to understand and interpret the dreams of his patients.

The second chapter adopts a deductive method and brings us to conclusions that go way beyond the clinical sphere. For example, when Fagioli postulates that the death instinct is not necessarily destructive. It only proves to be destructive when it is not fused with the

libido. With the participation of the libido, paradoxically, the death instinct becomes the source of psychic development: it acts as the so called disappearance fantasy (fantasia di sparizione).

A series of reflections brings the author to formulate his well-known theory of human birth. That is the discovery of how the biological conditions of foetal development undergo a fundamental transformation at the moment of birth. Birth is the moment in which a purely biological reality, that of the foetus, is transformed into human reality.

Human identity begins no sooner or later than at birth, with the first manifestation of the disappearance fantasy; it is “a first thought”, the “capacity to imagine” of the newborn. Interestingly, this primal Ego of birth comes into being as a result of the impact which the intense physical stimuli of the external world has on the fragile newborn: in particular when the retina is first stimulated by the light. The human Ego is not, therefore, a result of the relationship with the mother and her breast, which presents itself only in a secondary phase.

The primal Ego is therefore the transformation into internal images of a previous biological situation where the foetus, being in cutaneous contact with the amniotic liquid, had a libidinal charge. As such, it does not just represent a “first awareness and knowledge of oneself”: it is also an intuition-hope that another living entity, with whom one can relate to, exists.

In recent times, Fagioli’s birth theory, which was postulated forty years ago, has received strong confirmation from medical research: for example, in the recent discovery that the foetus has a possibility of life around the twenty-fourth week of pregnancy (a possibility of life

that, however, is not life until one is actually born). It is interesting to note that it is in this phase of gestation the connections between the retina and the visual cortex are formed.

Fagioli's theory affirms the biological origins of the psyche, and viceversa sees its demise when the biological premises cease to exist. Therefore, in an age like ours, characterized by religious interference in the social and political life of many countries, it has attracted enormous attention. The exact description as to why human life originates only at the moment of birth constitutes, in effect, an extraordinary contribution to current debates on bioethics.

The following three chapters of the book deal with the dynamics of the first year of life and analyze the conceptual chaos that reigns in psychoanalysis. In particular, the third chapter reconstructs the vicissitudes of the oral libido giving the term "desire" its rightful definition.

Another chapter is dedicated to the theme of envy, linking it to the concept of "negation". According to Fagioli, it is impossible to interpret dreams without a correct understanding of negation, provided that the term is defined in an unambiguous way. According to the author, negation implies that someone or something is unconsciously denigrated and represented as the opposite of what it really is: "it is not what it is". Whilst classic psychoanalytic doctrine, as is well known, considers dreams to be a vicarious expression of unacceptable wishes, Fagioli claims that dreams are "thoughts in images". That is, a non-conscious thought that can go in two directions: towards a profound and intuitive under-

standing of what happens in the interpersonal relationship or towards a violent falsification –"negation" – of human reality.

The readers

As mentioned previously, *Death Instinct and Knowledge* was originally written for specialists in the field. Paradoxically, the psychoanalysts of the time were not well inclined towards its contents, while on the other hand, the book has always proven popular among non-specialist readers and young psychiatrists.

The book offers a new psychodynamic theory and an innovative, coherent methodology to all those who work in the field of psychiatry and psychotherapy. It allows them to face the entire range of psychiatric disorders without having to give up on the idea of curing patients considered too serious or incurable. Consequently, clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, but also their patients and kin, should all become familiar with the contents of the book.

Many Italian readers, not directly involved in clinical work, appreciate the book for its new theory on the origin and development of the human psyche. The idea of an irrational preverbal human identity, tending towards relationships is particularly striking, although such primary sociality may be destroyed in the course of life. The idea of a human Ego inclined by its very nature towards evolutive relationships with others, is considered by many to be fundamental for new secular ethics, and has attracted the growing interest of the Italian political left.

Index of the book

Publications by Massimo Fagioli

Published by Nuove Edizioni Romane:

Death Instinct and Knowledge
1972, 2007[12]

The Marionette and the Puppet
1974, 2007[9]

Birth Theory and Human Castration
1975, 2008[9]

Child Woman and the Transformation of Man
1980, 2007[7]

History of a Research. Lectures 2002
2006, 2007[2]

An Irrational Life. Lectures 2006
2006, 2007[2]

Das Unbewusste. *The Unknowable. Lectures 2003*
2007

Published by L'Asino d'oro edizioni:

Disappearance Fantasy. Lectures 2007
2009

Massimo Fagioli. Biographical notes

He graduates in Medicine and Surgery in Rome and specializes in Neuropsychiatry at the University of Modena.
1957-59: He is Assistant in the Psychiatric hospital of Venice.
1960-62: He is Assistant in the Psychiatric hospital of Padua.
1962-64: He directs the Therapeutic Community in Italian, at the Bellevue Clinic directed by Ludwig Binswanger in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland.
1964-65: He moves the Therapeutic community for psychotics to Rome: he sets up a private practice.
1968: He concludes his training at the Institute of Italian Psychoanalysis of Rome.
1970: He writes *Death Instinct and Knowledge*.
1974: He writes *The Marionnette and the Puppet* and *Theory of Human Birth and Castration*.
Autumn 1975: The supervisory sessions held at the Institute of Psychiatry of the "Sapienza" University of Rome, spontaneously give rise to the Collective Analysis.
1979: He writes *Child Woman and the Transformation of Man*.
1980: The Collective Analysis moves from its university location to a private consulting room.
1981: He abolishes individual analyses.
1985-94: He collaborates with the director Marco Bellocchio (in the films *Devil in the flesh* (1986) with M. Detmers, in 1991 *The condemnation* winner of the Silver Bear at the Cinema Festival of Berlin, and in 1991 he writes the screenplay for *The butterfly's dream*).
1992: The psychotherapists who undergo their training

at the Collective Analysis set up a magazine specialized in psychiatry and psychotherapy called “Il sogno della farfalla”.
Since 1991 he has collaborated with a group of young architects. In 1994 a catalogue, *The Courage of Images*, containing these projects is published. And until 1998 an exhibition bearing the same name is organized in various Italian cultural institutes abroad as well as in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome and a convention at the Eliseo Theatre.
He directed, single-handedly, the following films: *The moon's sky* (1997), *Mélange* (1999).
Since 1997 “Incontri di ricerca psichiatrica” (Psychiatric research meetings) have been held on a regular basis at the “Sapienza” University of Rome, and their proceedings then published.
Since 2000 he has participated on a number of programs on Rai television.
Since 2002 he has been Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Chieti-Pescara “Gabriele d'Annunzio”.
Since 2006 he has written a feature article entitled “Transformation” on the current affairs and political weekly “Left”.
2007-2008: He is present at the Salone Internazionale del Libro di Torino (Torino Book Fair) with his books and publications.
2008: He has participated in the Torino architectural exhibition “Architektonica”, with an exhibition of original projects created from 1999 to 2008.
2009: He presents his new book *Disappearance Fantasy. Lectures 2007* published by l'Asino d'oro Editions at the Salone Internazionale del Libro di Torino.

Death Instinct and Knowledge

Excerpts

I.

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?
Reply, reply,
It is engender'd in the eyes
With gazing fed; and fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies:
Let us all ring fancy's knell;
I'll begin it. Ding dong, bell
Ding, dong, bell *.

* W. Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act III, Scene 2.

The disappearance fantasy

Practioners of psychoanalysis are well aware that, among a multitude of problems, the one we encounter frequently if not invariably is the analysand's reaction, behavioural or simply unconscious, when the analyst suspends the analytical sessions.

The analyst absents himself[1].

The patient experiences a frustration.

The "absence" of the analyst

Before seeking to understand the meaning of the word frustration, I would like to respond to a possible objection. A response which may serve to corroborate the concept of the global approach to the patient in analysis and forestall an incoherent transfer approach.

I refer to the objection that references to and discussions regarding reality, such as the communication of the analyst's need to absent himself, are addressed to the patient's valid Ego and are therefore extra-analytical.

[...] I believe, instead, that everything which occurs in analysis should be considered within the context of the global relationship, conscious and unconscious, of the patient with the analyst (transference) and of the analyst with the patient (counter-transference).

[...]

Imposing the analyst's personal needs upon the patient (and the same holds for being late or early for appointments, etc.) as a simple matter of reality, without considering them as part of the analytical process within the context of transference and counter-transference is, I think, a sudden annulment of the patient *in toto* along with his conscious and unconscious dynamics. It is, as I suggested above, an "absence" of the analyst, an analyst who suddenly becomes silent, who does not answer; an analyst who, as we shall see, has disappeared, has died.

In other words, these occurences are abrupt incoherences which allow the patient to corroborate his internal pathological realizations of identification and projection of altered images (or objects).

The analyst who, having set the session for 5 p.m., receives the patient ten minutes late allows the patient to apprehend as a reality his projection of incoherence. As I have witnessed more than once, the patient formulates a more or less unconscious thought along the following lines: «When he says something the analyst means something else. The analyst speaks in riddles». And thereafter, every time the analyst interprets, the patient is left in doubt about what the analyst might have meant beyond what he expressed verbally [...].

We are faced with a phenomenon in which the psychoanalytical situation is turned on its head. It is the patient who has to interpret the attitude and, more gen-

erally, the enigmatic behaviour of the analyst. We thus deduce that, in this moment of incoherence, the analyst is absent, has disappeared.

[...]

The problem of "frustration"

I am aware that, even though certain Authors have examined the problem of "the analysts' vacations", it might seem unjustified and obscure to attribute the significance of an analytical problem to the absence of the analyst (a concept of absence which we have broadened to include psychological absence in the sense of a "vacation" taken by the analyst-as-interpreter, even though the physical object, the analyst, is present).

I feel it is opportune, therefore, to state at the outset that the entire content of this book can be considered, in a certain sense, as a study intended to clarify and elucidate this concept of "absence", which is also a concept of not being, of disappearance.

At the beginning of the chapter, removing the two sentences referring to absence and frustration from the context of the discussion, we said that the analyst absents himself, cancelling one or more sessions and the patient experiences a frustration.

We shall now try to achieve as exact an understanding of this term as possible. Frustration is normally understood as preventing or opposing the satisfaction of a desire or a drive.

I think this limited definition is insufficient. If we consider a masochistic or generically auto-aggressive

drive and we oppose it, we may say that we have frustrated the subject in satisfying his objective. But the reaction is frequently not hate but love, because we have prevented an auto-aggressive or generically non-evolutive realization. When, instead, we prevent a libidinal satisfaction – or, more exactly, one of knowledge, one which is evolving generically towards a more broadly human realization, towards a *plus* which seems as indefinite and vague as the so-called neurotic human manifestations to be modified appear increasingly precise and specific – in this case we obtain not a development of the libido but hatred and realizations of a *minus*, of emptiness, disintegration, loss of evolutive potential. Consequently, we cannot accept the term frustration as meaning simply prevention of the satisfaction of drives.

In the analytical setting [...] the relationship of transference and counter-transference is established and accepted as part of the initial contract for psychoanalytic treatment. Afterwards it is the transference and countertransference relationship which will constitute the basis and the matrix of each interpretation. The "facts of reality" lie outside the analytical situation, condensed and assumed in the original contract.

A modification of the original contract leads to the appearance of a "fact of reality" into the psychoanalytical situation and hence to "confusion", that is, to mixing reality and one's imaginings within the interpersonal dynamic to the detriment of the achievement of the reality principle which is our aim.

Viewed in this situation of – let us call it pure – analytical setting, the concept of frustration begins to be revealed in all its complexity. Within this conceptual framework, the term frustration is to be regarded as:

1. Frustration: contesting the needs of the patient.
2. Frustration: contesting the requirements of the patient.

The "needs" of the patient are those infantile and isolated drives which tend towards direct satisfaction. These have their matrix in the perversion of the instinct.

Within the analytical setting, the analyst frustrates, that is he opposes, the direct and indirect satisfaction of the patient's instinctual needs. What is accepted, since the patient always succeeds in getting indirect sexual satisfactions, is included in the initial contract (assumption of reality). [...]

In this case the term frustration is to be understood as preventing the blind satisfaction of the patient's sexual instinct and the realization of the death instinct. That is, on the one hand we mean frustration of the patient's greed (perversion of the sexual instinct) in that a direct satisfaction of this sort would lead him to introject a physical object and hence to projective identification, that is to a sadomasochistic relationship with the other person, experienced as a persecutory phantasm.

On the other hand, we mean frustration of the death instinct in its expression as an isolated drive against the analyst directed at eliminating him, rendering him nonexistent, or at least devaluating him, modifying him in the sense of altering what he is, in fact, in terms of his human and, more specifically, his psychoanalytical reality.

Opposition to and prevention of the fundamental mechanism whereby the sadomasochistic relationship of introjective and projective identification leads ineluctably to loss of that sexuality which, however perverse it may

be (greed), is a precious matrix for the development of seeing, consciousness and verbal thought once it has been contained and transformed.

In this context, *non*-frustration (consoling, reassuring, being indulgent about the fee and the patient's "need" to miss sessions) would be an absence, an aggressiveness, would mean pushing the analysand towards a non-realization of the evolution of the self, towards regression with defusion of the instincts and splitting.

We consider the "requirements" of the analysand as tendencies towards an evolutive object relation in which the instinctive drives (sex and death) are contained, are directed towards fusion and integration, and utilized for the development of knowledge and the potential for thought. Within the context of these requirements, then, the analyst should never be frustrating.

Because our task is to satisfy the requirements of the analysand to be helped through interpretation; to satisfy to the greatest extent and in the best way possible his requirements to listen and to absorb the analyst's attention, his care and his words. In this case the patient "contains" his sexual desires and we must satisfy them and help him to integrate them with the introjection of the image and of the quality (thought) of the analyst-object. In this case, non-satisfaction is frustration-aggressiveness, i.e. absence.

The following are apparently gratifications, but in reality they are frustrations-aggressiveness:

1. Examination of reality, in that we confuse the patient about the identity of the object-analyst who looks at reality with physical eyes and *does not see* the meaning of the patient's communication.

2. Orders, advice, encouragement, reassurance, in that we confuse the patient about the identity of the analyst who demonstrates a sadistic attitude of imposition, coercion, control of the patient-object.
3. Communication of scientific notions, in that we confuse the patient about the identity of the analyst who puts inside the patient abstractions, or objects and images of objects which have not been elaborated.

Gratifications of requirements are: interpretations of the patient's communications, verbalization of the sense, the significance of the communication, verbalization of the patient's transference relationship with the analyst. In this case, in other words, we *give* to the patient, we satisfy his requirements to introject the words, knowledge and qualities of the analyst-object.

I think I must note, however, that the term frustration is generally taken to imply aggressiveness towards the object. That is, the term connotes: to coerce, to contest, contemporaneously and confusedly, both the patient's needs and his requirements. Behind a facade of affability and gratification, the analyst can give the patient the aforementioned frustration-aggressiveness, and then frustrate-attack his sexual and death drives which have become further split and more loosely contained. From reassurance (caresses-kisses) to reproval (physically striking or abandoning the object).

Since the term frustration implies reference to an evolutive factor, we refuse to use it to designate any act addressing another person when this includes a destructive charge. When our behaviour towards the other is invalidated by a *mors tua vita mea* dynamic.

Otherwise it would be absurd, within the context of analysis itself, to conceive of analysis as continually frustrating. In analysing, in interpreting, we are opposing aggressive and disintegrative tendencies. If frustrating means instead addressing the other person with a destructive drive, this would make us the utmost in non-analysts. We would orient ourselves increasingly towards non-analytical attitudes and actions, examinations of reality, affability, advice and encouragement; in other words we would assume a good Samaritan or pedagogical role[2]. We would revert to an interhuman approach based on ignorance of the individual's unconscious and conscious, of his global way of being [...].

At this stage, it may be less difficult to accept the close connection between the problem-phenomenon of frustration and the problem-phenomenon of "absence".

Frustration understood in a negative sense, as the expression of a counter-transferential emotional drive of aggressiveness (death instinct) derives, on careful examination from an absence of the analyst. An absent analyst is one who relinquishes understanding and interpretation to assume a good Samaritan or pedagogical role; one who overlooks (or at least underestimates) the analysand's human situation in order to satisfy his own personal requirements [...].

At this point, the very distinction between physical and psychical absence disappears. The analyst who physically absents himself from the session is not frustrating the disappearance fantasy (aggressive) because of his physical absence but because he prefers to think of himself rather than of the analysand. He loses interest in the external object (or underestimates it). And, appearances notwithstanding, this loss of interest (absence), is not the

lack of something but the *active manifestation of a drive* (the death instinct) directed against the external object[3].

This last affirmation affords us a basis for conceptualizing the problem of frustration in the psychoanalytical setting.

In the first place, frustration should *not* be the active expression of an unconscious realization of the analyst, even if it is disguised by facts of reality. The analyst would, in fact, be actuating a drive without being aware of it, rather than, as it would appear, abstaining or being neutral. With this act, the analyst is no longer there, he presents the other person with that phenomenon of absence which is the first and fundamental "aggressiveness". An unconscious realization of this sort on the part of an unaware analyst, in turn, includes ignorance of the evolutive (transformative) potential of the other person. And this "ignorance" should not be seen as a question of being able or not to undertake an examination of reality (make a diagnosis). Rather it is an active counter-transferential emotional impulse (an isolated drive of the death instinct) directed at negating, annulling the potential of the analysand himself.

At this stage, we are left with only one solution to clarify the concept of frustration in analysis. That is, that the analyst assumes a counter-transferential stance of non-participation in a relationship based on the tendency to satisfy the isolated drives directed against him by the analysand. In this case the (sexual and death) drives will not be attacked and destroyed by an analyst playing a Superegoic role, but rather will remain without an object for their realization. The remaining alternative is for the analysand to reintegrate the drives.

[...]

These considerations about the concept of frustration render more acceptable the initial affirmation that the analyst who absents himself physically outside the terms of the contract frustrates-attacks the analysand.

When the analyst absents himself *he expects* (adult) mature behaviour and, still more, an (adult) unconscious attitude from the patient [...].

That is, the analysand must "understand", in other words interpret, the analyst's behaviour. The analyst is therefore absent, as we noted before, and what is present is an external aggressive object. The very ambivalence of the manner in which the transfer relation functions prevents comprehension-interpretation on the part of the analysand. By the terms of the concept of transference itself the analyst is, *a priori*, a sadistic or generically deteriorated image. That is to say, the projection of identifications realized by the patient on the basis of current or previous ambivalence. For this reason, severance is abandonment, in other words an aggressive action on the part of the analyst. It cannot be accepted as an *agreement* but, instead, is experienced emotionally by the patient as an act of violence to which he reacts implicitly. The reactions may either be simply unconscious, involving modifications of the patient's own inner structures, or also behavioural (acting-out). Such reactions result in a deficit of the Ego, an aggressive internal realization or the realization of a bad internal object which leads to a feeling of inferiority[4]. [...]

The problem was thus posed of studying these reactions, which can generally be subsumed within the broader problem of identification with the aggressor.

The reaction of the analysand to the absence of the analyst

[...] The patient "identifies" with the analyst-aggressor. That is, he makes himself like the analyst, an external object imbued with aggressiveness, *containing* aggressiveness or *being* aggressiveness.

At this stage I believe it is necessary to go as deeply as we can into the question of the (bad) external aggressive object. To do so, we shall make use of the famous example cited by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* of the child who reverses his situation as an abandoned object (one who undergoes) to assume the active role wherein it is he who makes the object (wooden reel, mother) disappear and reappear.

The assumption is that the child identifies with the aggressive mother who abandons him. That is, the child makes himself like the external aggressive object; becomes, realizes himself as, the object – and does what it does.

But we cannot consider the external object (mother) who leaves the house or the psychoanalyst who cannot make it to the session to be aggressive, imbued with aggressiveness, bad. Even more emphatically, in the case of the death of the external object we cannot regard it as intended to injure the other object, to produce the *minus* to which we alluded earlier. But for the child or patient, the external object that leaves, that dies, is aggressive.

So to explain the concept of the bad external object we must resort to the concept of tension (anxiety) in the object relation, that is to the concept of the *basic sado-masochistic object relation*, which as we shall see later encompasses the other one too.

That is, within the context of the object relation the external object is not experienced emotionally in terms of its reality, of what it really is. The external object is always the projection (or at least also the projection) of a present or previous identification established on a basis of ambivalence.

Once this concept has been clarified the consequences are also clear: every act of the external object-analyst with the exception of interpretation is not reality but the expression of an emotional drive of the analyst himself directed against the analysand. In particular, abandonment (cancellation of the session) is an aggressive act directed against the analysand.

Returning to the concepts presented above, when the analyst cancels a session he is no longer the analyst but an external object which, by expressing an isolated death drive (loss of interest), allows the analysand, in turn, to express an isolated death drive against the aggressive object. That is, the analysand is unable to endure the aggressive act and reacts by assuming an active role.

The phenomenon might be expressed in this way: «It is not I who am pushed away (made to disappear), *it is I*[5] who push away, make the object disappear (and eventually reappear)». The identification does not take place with the real object (we may assume that the analyst who cancels a session does not want to push the patient away, make him disappear), but with a fantasized and, we must say, projected, unconscious image of the analyst.

At this point, bearing in mind that the analysand's relationship is with the *altered image* of the analyst, we introduce a well-known concept: the anxiety of losing the object. We may say straight off that this is not a fear based on real danger but a veritable anxiety [...].

What does the child or the neurotic person fear? They need the object for reassurance. Of what?

[...] We can infer that what the neurotic person (child, analysand) fears is not so much the absence of the object itself as the expression, on the part of the external object, of a drive to abandon him.

But not even this tentative conclusion explains the anxiety. An aggressive realization of the external object cannot cause anxiety. If we were to accept this, we would revert to the concept of real danger [...]. Hence, we can only conclude that what the child really fears is *his own inner reaction* faced with the fantasy of being attacked (abandoned, neglected).

Moreover, if we reconsider the two concepts of the reassuring physical presence and of the altered image of the object, we can note that although the external object is a sadistic image, its presence serves to neutralize another anxiety. [...]

The search for this other anxiety, this other danger, the potential damage resulting from an internal realization of the subject in his relation with the external object, leads us to the following formulation.

Greater damage than that caused by a sadomasochistic relation with the object can occur only through the realization of a non-relation with the object.

Moreover, the non-relation with the object is not caused by the external object in moving away from the subject, since we already know that the child does not endure the event in a passive state but assumes an active role.

The active role and the concept that the problem lies in the absence of the external object must of necessity lead us to conclude that what the child fears is his reac-

tion against the menacing (sadistic) object, a reaction directed at making the sadistic object itself disappear.

The physical presence of the object is a reality which enables the child to avoid realizing as true (omnipotent) the fantasy that it was he who caused the event: disappearance of the object. The reaction of the child (analysand) in terms of his unconscious fantasy when confronted by the event of "absence" is to be regarded as a *disappearance fantasy*.

The external object (breast, mother, father or any other libidinal object) is gratifying so long as it does not allow the child to realize the disappearance fantasy. It is aggressive when it does allow this, that is when it absents itself. In this moment the child is prey to his own fantasy of eliminating the object. He realizes himself as aggressive *in toto* in his mode of being. In this moment, the problem of ambivalence is surpassed and the elimination of the object is experienced emotionally as *pure aggressivity*. His unconscious realization is that the absence, the disappearance of the object was due to him, to a drive-fantasy of his. Reality, the absence of the object, has favoured the omnipotent realization of the unconscious disappearance fantasy.

1 We shall come back to this term to examine how it may entail a psychological, as well as a physical, absence, when the analyst fails to understand or to interpret correctly.

2 Absence and repression are the two aspects of violence with which human psychic reality has always been confronted.

3 At this point, a basic aspect of the argument should be stressed. Absence, indifference, "scientific" neutrality is not the lack of, but rather the active expression of a drive [...].

4 I cite a patient's dream as an example. «She was returning to Rome on foot from her vacation. She stopped at a first station which was empty and abandoned. In a second station there were people. Here she found the bracelet and the chain she had been wearing around her neck, which she had lost. It took her five hours». I noted that five months of analysis had gone by since the summer break. Five months of analytical work had been necessary for the patient to recover the possibility of a rapport with the analyst. The first station represented a period in which the patient had been absent because of a physical ailment. The second represented other holidays which the patient had agreed to accept in accordance with the contract and where, as a result, she recovered her sexuality-affectivity (the chain being the mouth and the bracelet the hand).

5 The term "identification" is not exact. I leave it for the moment, but will explain further on that the phenomenon we are examining here in one of "making oneself equal" to the fantasized aggressive object. That is, it should not be regarded as a dynamic of introjection of the object, but rather as an unconscious realization directed against the object.

II.

The disappearance fantasy and the death instinct

[...]

The sadomasochistic object relation and the disappearance fantasy against the object

[...] The child's relation with its parents (and the analysand's with the analyst) includes, as a basic factor of the inter-human relationship, the projection of internal situations of the self onto the outer object. The internal situations of the self, in turn, derive from identifications carried out on an ambivalent basis.

These two premises confirm the assumption of the foregoing pages, i.e. the concept that, for the subject (child, analysand), the outer object is imbued with aggressiveness, bent on harming him.

The relationship is, therefore, sadomasochistic.

The ever-present tendency to break free from this relationship dominates the life of the child and of the man whose object relations are based on projections of their own inner situations onto the external object. The sadism of the external object and one's own correspon-

ding masochistic dependence constitute an insoluble conflict in that, due to projection, the external object is also one's own inner libidinal situation, the representation as well as the result of the present and previous libidinal relationship with the object.

A severance from the external object for the purpose of resolving the human condition of masochistic dependence is represented, in the subject's psyche, as the elimination (disappearance) of the object.

An unconscious "logic", linked with and derived from projection, takes form as thought in the subject's mind [...]. This logic is the idea that the blame for one's own masochistic situation lies with the outside object.

A concept of cause is thus formulated which is clearly derived from not seeing reality, given the phenomenon of projection in the object relation. The object relation, derived from a primary ambivalence whereby the loved object was also eliminated within oneself, i.e. eaten and then projected anew onto the object itself, is a relation founded on blindness with regard to reality. There is no distinction between what is and what has been projected, that is added to, reality. Blindness leads to the tendency to resolve one's own situation of masochistic dependence (i.e. castration) by increasing this very blindness through the elimination of the external object. To cause the disappearance of the sadistic object (the "cause" of one's own masochistic or castrated state) is the "logical" thought which ensues.

Achieving autonomy from the object by exercising the annulment drive against it means eliminating one's own libidinal situation, which had realized the projected identification onto the object. The result is isolation, non-object-relation, darkness and inner emptiness. The

child and the adult's unconscious, if they are not completely blind, intuitively sense this, and this situation, which derives from non-blindness, takes the form of a conflict, a continual struggle between the need for the masochistic relationship and the tendency to break with this relationship.

I think that the infant's "peek-a-boo" game and the child's game of hide-and-seek refer to this dynamic. The game of making the object disappear fantastically, making it reappear and rejoicing at its reappearance, should be understood intuitively as a disappearance fantasy against the object, realization of autonomy-darkness blindness, then overcoming the inner emptiness by making the object reappear.

[...]

The death instinct as fantasy

Melanie Klein says that man is born with the death instinct and that from the very beginning he is exposed to the innate polarity of the instincts [...].

Observing reality, we can reason in this way: the baby is born out of the darkness and water of the intra-uterine situation. He comes (it would appear logical!) from a preceding stage:

> «It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life *to restore an earlier state of things* which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces...»[1].

Faced with the constraint of coming into the outer world, faced with and upset by the bombardment of stimuli derived from the new situation, the baby will react by desiring and fantasizing a return to the preceding stage.

But at this point I think the conceptualization must be improved upon. The tendency (fantasy-desire) to return to the preceding stage cannot be formulated solely in these terms: *we must concurrently conceptualize an annulment, a disappearance of the present situation*. We thus have two concepts:

1. Fantasy-desire (to return to the preceding stage).
2. Annulment, disappearance of the newborn situation.

The «restoration of an earlier state of things» thus obviously includes another realization in a different and diametrically opposed direction, that of rendering non-existent the presently experienced situation.

If we point out that the tendency-desire[2] to re-establish a former stage can be realized only as a fantasy we can, and of course we must, conceptualize that the annulment of the presently experienced situation is also realized as a fantasy.

At this point, if we add the concept that fantasy is the mental expression of instinct, we can state that, at birth, within the context of the tendency to return to the preceding stage, that is within the context of the upsurge of the death instinct in the human being, a fantasy of annulment is realized, a fantasy of the non-existence of the presently experienced situation.

From this formulation of the death instinct as a drive of annulling, of rendering non-existent, I believe we can

go so far as to derive the other term, i.e. disappearance. In using the term "disappearance", we are implicitly referring to a more specific formulation than that which the terms "fantasy of annulment" or of "non-existence" can afford.

To use the term "disappearance" is to suggest a connection with the faculty of seeing. The word has been chosen to reflect the understanding that the upsurge in the newborn infant of the death instinct and of the fantasy of "aggressiveness" against the new situation of being born expresses itself through the use of a readily available and omnipotent power, i.e. the power of creating darkness with the eyes [...].

While the use of the eyes to create darkness and to not see and, still more, to render the surrounding reality non-existent is easily observable in a child who turns his head or closes his eyes when faced with a person who causes him anxiety, in the newborn infant it can only be inferred by intuition.

Following the indication afforded by the child's method of rendering reality non-existent by creating darkness around him, we reflect on the newborn infant and consider that:

a) his preceding situation – the intra-uterine environment – was characterized by darkness;
b) the only truly new situation, absolutely and completely non-existent before, *is that of the light*.

We have said, then, in point *b)* that light corresponds to a situation which was completely non-existent before.

Thus, the reason why the death instinct is realized as

disappearance fantasy is that, within the context of re-establishing the preceding stage, this preceding stage is specifically characterized by the lack of an object relation in which the eyes are stimulated. The newborn child, in his reaction of «passing from a passive to an active role», annuls the aggressive reality which upsets him and realizes a fantasized omnipotence whereby the surrounding darkness of the intra-uterine situation becomes a possibility of determining a specific reality outside the self.

I would like to emphasize the implications of this reasoning. The specific "reality" which the newborn infant determines is a non-reality, a non-existence of something, a reality of annulment, of darkness, of disappearance. The annulment of the light makes the darkness a result of the non-existence of this very light. Darkness is thus no longer a reality but an annulment of an existing reality (light).

I believe that we can situate the concept of instinct, specifically the death instinct, within this passage from a situation of the existence of a reality of darkness in the intra-uterine environment to a situation of not accepting the extra-uterine reality and fantastically determining another "reality".

The "aggressive" *drive* against the light takes shape as a psychical realization of creating darkness, a concept which includes that of rendering light itself non-existent, annulling it. Whereas darkness was an external reality in the preceding situation, in the new situation of "seeing the light" darkness is a fantasy of "aggressiveness" against reality itself.

We thus formulate the death instinct and its related mental expression, i.e. the fantasy of annulling existing

reality, as a fantasy of determining *the absolute opposite* of actual reality. And since we have also pointed out that that situation which is absolutely opposed to the intrauterine one is the presence of light (*the absolute novelty* is light), we say that this annulling of reality and rendering it non-existent, this fantasized determination of the opposite (contrary) of that which is in reality, assumes the character of a specific fantasy of making the light disappear, of creating darkness.

We can therefore define the reaction of "aggressiveness" against the new situation of being born as *the upsurge of the death instinct which is expressed mentally as disappearance fantasy*. We can hypothesize that the baby is born with the disappearance fantasy, the fantasy of making the stimulating environment (external object) disappear and of making his born self disappear, of annulling, and of annulling himself as a living being, desiring and fantasizing a return to the darkness and the water of the intra-uterine stage.

It may thus be hypothesized that man's first fantasy is the disappearance fantasy.

Might the disappearance fantasy be the memory trace of the preceding stage?

[...] As a hypothesis we might think that the newborn child perceives the intra-uterine darkness and that he then makes of this perception a possible means of modifying reality in the sense opposed to what it is. In this case it would be a question of a memory trace and would

imply an introjection of the intra-uterine darkness and projection of the preceding introjection onto the light [...].

The first consideration that comes to mind is that the perception of darkness must take place through the eyes since darkness, although it is the opposite of light, still concerns visual perception. We cannot conceive of a dynamic of relationship with darkness through the use of other senses (skin, ears, mouth, smell).

But in the intra-uterine environment the dynamics of the object relation eyes-external object does not exist. The eyes do not function. The newborn infant is physically blind and his blindness, in the sense of an absence of physical activity, corresponds to the fact that there is no external stimulus (which could only be light) that could engage the physical visual activity of the foetus. In fact, there is no outer light to excite the eyes of the foetus .We have, then, external darkness and blindness of the foetus. Since the foetus has no visual receptivity, there can be neither perception nor introjection of darkness.

We can also consider that darkness is an absence of light. A non-existence cannot be perceived and introjected. In other words, perception and introjection imply an object relation which, in the intra-uterine environment, does not exist insofar as perceiving with the eyes is concerned. No visual object relation, therefore, and no perception-introjection of darkness.

The existing external reality does not establish an object relation with the foetus. Or, to put it even more precisely, *the foetus does not establish an object relation with the surrounding darkness.*

The disappearance fantasy at birth, the creation of

darkness around oneself, is thus not the projection of a previously introjected memory trace upon the light. But before drawing this conclusion and postulating the disappearance fantasy at birth as a totally new situation of the newborn infant, we must still consider the possibility that a memory trace (although certainly not deriving from a perception of darkness), might instead derive from another element of the situation preceding birth. We must consider the possibility that the memory trace appears in the *memory* of a situation of visual non object relation. But even in this case we cannot speak of a memory trace because a non-relation cannot give rise to a memory since there is no perception in a non-relation.

[...]

The disappearance fantasy at birth is hence to be understood as the creation of a fantasized reality outside of the self. We thus introduce the concept of *creativity in the death instinct*. This may seem paradoxical but is not in fact, since the impulse to render a reality non-existent is not necessarily "destructive" from a conceptual standpoint.

We shall see in the following pages that destructiveness is linked solely to the direction of the disappearance fantasy, i.e. destructiveness occurs only when the death impulse is split from sexuality and directed against the outer object. When, instead, it is contained within the self, it assumes its full creative sense of creating a new situation, precisely through annulment, by rendering nonexistent a presently lived situation of one's own.

The memory trace of the preceding stage

The disappearance fantasy-death instinct, then, annuls, causes to disappear, renders non-existent the object and the object relation.

Here I would like to stress that the relationship with the atmosphere, light, cold, air, is to be regarded as an object relationship. But in this case we must accept that the foetus also has an object relation in the intra-uterine situation: with the amniotic fluid.

Let us reflect on the change that occurs in the object relation, in that the object with which the child is in relationship becomes excessively stimulating and kindles extreme tension. That is, the object becomes excessively inanimate. This consideration leads us to specify that the death instinct is expressed against a cold, inanimate object [...].

The amniotic fluid within the mother's womb was not inanimate (or was so only relatively) in that it provided warmth and homeostasis. In the mother's uterus the skin, rather than the mouth, is the erogenous zone of the first object relation. Furthermore, we must reflect:

a) that the object relation is to be considered as such even in the case of a simple phenomenon of tactile stimulation;
b) that the dynamics of perceptive-receptive phenomena implicit in the concept first object relation can operate also through the skin.

In this latter case we would need to study the perceptive-receptive dynamics with the amniotic fluid, and this would introduce the idea of a prenatal realization of an unconscious fantasy of the Self as a calm and storm-free

sea. This idea is not acceptable, even if it does not find itself in contradiction with the dreams of men, and would indeed find ample confirmation in the oniric symbolism of the unconscious-sea and in theories of a primordial marine state of the human species.

But even if we look at it from this standpoint and go so far as to regard the baby's fantasized reaction (which cannot be in the form of images!) to the earlier calm within the amniotic fluid at every perturbation, however minor, as signs of a proto-death instinct, our original point still holds.

In any case it must be considered that the «tendency-instinct to reproduce, restore the earlier state of things» is to be situated at the moment of birth. It is at this moment that the drive-fantasy of not being, of not being born, of being in the darkness of the intra-uterine situation, takes place. This is so particularly because only at that moment can we imagine a tendency to return to the preceding stage by creating darkness, by rendering the eyes not stimulated or hurt by the light [...].

It will be this, then, that man will search for and struggle against all his life. The tendency to return to darkness, to not seeing, to not knowing. And he will always seek tranquillity, relaxation, withdrawal from stimuli, physical homeostasis. But his greatest conflict will come from the tendency to return to darkness, to close his eyes, turn his head, ignore, make disappear, annul. Make himself blind, not see. This tendency will terrify him and he will struggle to oppose it and will succeed to the extent that he fuses it with libido-pleasure.

If we accept that the unconscious calm sea is the perception of the "calm" of the amniotic fluid, we must also say that the foetus in the uterus had, through the medi-

um of the skin, *the capacity to be aware of the existence of the object by perceiving the object's qualities* (calm, warmth).

This point, in my view, must be emphasized. In a situation of physical blindness, the foetus can sense the existence-presence of the object through the object's qualities. The foetus makes uses of his possibilities, which we must consider *libidinal*, to perceive the qualities and characteristics of the object and is aware of its existence.

[...]

As we previously linked the concept of the death instinct as a tendency to return to the preceding earlier state with the concept of annulment of the present state, so must we now join the concept of annulment of the present state to the concept of a return to the preceding stage. This latter concept implies that of *tendency towards*. A tendency towards which is the verbalization of a libidinal realization. Because, as we have said, the death instinct, in and of itself, is a pushing away from and of the object.

We must therefore accept that, at birth, the baby has already realized a tactile libidinal relationship with the amniotic fluid and that, thanks to the valid remnant of this tactile-libidinal relationship, the disappearance fantasy can be mixed with a possibility of taking the intrauterine self back into oneself. Of recreating the foetal self for what it possessed of libido-touch-pleasure.

[...]

Thanks to the earlier realization of the intra-uterine libidinal self and the associated libidinal drive which functions as energy, the disappearance fantasy as annul-

ment of the self and of the object transforms itself into an inner realization of an image: the memory trace of the intra-uterine environment.

It thus transpires that *the death instinct*, thanks to the existence of this libidinal situation, *constitutes the matrix of the development of the life of the psyche*, of the possibility of fantasy and later of verbal thought and speech. We conceptualize the creation of the image (memory trace) as the fusion of the death instinct with the libido.

The realization of the object relation with the amniotic fluid is one in which the existence of the object is realized through a biological sensitivity. At birth, the death instinct as a drive of the non-existence of the new self – born and in relationship with the light – leads to the *fantasy of the existence* of the intra-uterine object as its image. As a *memory or mnemonic trace*. The unconscious calm sea. The death instinct as a fantasy thus includes two creations: the fantasy of the non-existence of the born self and the fantasy of the existence, in image, of the intra-uterine environment.

We have already discussed the question of the memory trace of physical intra-uterine darkness. With his fantasy of making the external light disappear, the newborn infant creates around himself the darkness of the preceding situation in which he perceived the existence of the object in a situation of non-existence of light, through his libidinal relation with the object.

The baby's annulment of the inanimate (and hence "aggressive") object and of his own relationship with it leads him to an inner seeing, to the internal conception of a memory trace. In other words, *the abolition of the*

relationship with the physical inanimate object is the matrix of the possibility of seeing beyond physical reality itself. In fact the child sees (understands intuitively) correctly when, after the turbulence of birth, he seeks the gratifying breast (the concept of hope).

Should he limit himself to seeing only the “reality” of the situation experienced immediately at birth, i.e. his relationship with inanimate objects, he would be mistaken about the significance of his coming into the world, that is he would be misled into thinking that the meaning of his being in the world lay in the relation with inanimate objects and not in the inter-human relationship. Should he limit himself to seeing the physical reality of the immediate postnatal situation of being out in the air and the light he would see physical reality as it is but would be completely mistaken about the significance of his coming into the world.

Nor is this all. The internal libidinal situation will enable the child, in his subsequent relation with the breast, to not be a blind devourer but rather to intuit the images and qualities (warmth, goodness, energy) of the breast. With his psychical life of seeing-intuiting qualities, the newborn infant thus opposes the libidinal dynamic of eating the physical object. Operating alone, this dynamic would lead to a loss of libido which, in a state of psychical blindness, would transform living objects into dead internal objects [...].

It is after birth, i.e. in the relationship with the breast, that a state of blindness is established in which the opposite situation prevails: a libido and a libidinal relationship which result in introjection of the object causing it to dis-

appear inside the self and become black, resulting in inner emptiness, in the object made black, bad, dead.

This reflection leads to another. The foetus immersed in the amniotic fluid is in relationship /contact with the external object-amniotic fluid in which he realizes sensitivity without avidity and without looking at the object. He experiences the presence of the object through reception-perception of the qualities (warmth, homeostasis) of the object. He thus develops the possibility of perceiving the existence of the object through his biological sensitivity.

Then, at birth, the disappearance fantasy against the inanimate world is accompanied by the creation of a *libidinal and psychical* (visual) self. The hope-intuition that a breast exists. Still *later*, within the dynamics of the relationship with this breast, the disappearance fantasy enacted against it leads to a contact-relation in the opposite sense. A contact-relation which, by devouring the physical breast-object, leads to darkness and inner emptiness. Leads to the negation of the very libido which enters into relationship with the object, or, at the very least, to a *confusion* between love and death.

However, we repeat that we cannot consider the disappearance fantasy in its pure state as death instinct. We believe that, with the upsurge of the disappearance fantasy, the infant only transforms his libidinal possibilities. This transformation becomes the possibility of sensing and introjecting the qualities of the object. If there were no libidinal participation, we might well think that the child would not even take the breast.

[...]

The memory trace of the intrauterine situation as a libidinal possibility which becomes desire

Bion's concept of the "presentiment that a breast exists" has no validity in the context of the ideas expressed above. We turn to this concept in order to deepen our discussion of the dynamics of the two instincts at birth and of how the first realization of physical relationship with the (breast) object may take place. We do, in fact, have two fundamental concepts:

1. The concept of vitality.
2. The concept of fantasy.

Vitality is the realization of a libidinal self on the part of the foetus in the uterus. When it is in relationship with the object (amniotic fluid) via its biological sensibility, the foetus realizes the existence of the object by sensing the object's qualities.

Fantasy is the realization of the death instinct, insofar as it is a fantasy of the non-existence of neonatal reality. The newborn brings the intrauterine self, that is the self in relation with the object, into existence in the memory trace (formation of the memory-image).

In other words, the contact with the amniotic fluid, which is no longer a reality, is created as an internal image of the object (the unconscious calm sea) by the fantasy of existence. What was outside before, the amniotic fluid, takes form within the newborn child as a memory trace of the lost object, a memory trace which implies both the image of the object and the possibility of an object relation.

At this point a question arises. Can the newborn child

put this memory trace back outside himself? I mean, can we raise the problem of the beginning of the mechanism of projection and introjection? The memory trace realized within the self is put outside the self. Why? And how? Projection implies introjection. So we would have to think that the creation of the memory trace, rendering existent within the self an object which is no longer present in reality, includes the introjection of an image from the outside: i.e. an oral-visual relation with the object.

But obviously this cannot be so. The contact with the amniotic fluid is not a visual relation just as it is not an introjective relation; it is, rather, as we have said, a direct relation of the skin with the amniotic fluid and hence a relation of cutaneous, not oral, receptivity. Instead of the projection of an image or a memory, therefore, we have to conceptualize the possibility of an object relation and *a libidinal investment of the object*. The concept is that of hoping that there will be an object with which to establish an object relation.

It is in the physical relationship with the object that the mechanism of introjection followed by projection enters into play. The mouth (oral libido) introjects the physical breast object which, *fusing with the memory trace existing in the newborn child*, is then projected together with the memory trace itself. As a result of this, after the first contact, the breast is a fecal image and object. The basic sadomasochistic relation on which we have insisted is thus established, the phenomenon of the splitting into good breast (breast image) and bad breast (black breast). Into psychical and physical object, etc.

The disappearance fantasy at birth is unsuccessful in destroying the libidinal self which, on the contrary, suc-

cessfully transforms the disappearance fantasy into a memory trace of the intra-uterine situation. In our view, it is this libidinal realization of the self, in the sense of an internal libidinal possibility *independent of the direct relation with the object*, that motivates the baby to take the breast that is offered to him instead of passively experiencing introduction of the milk.

Not exactly a «presentiment that a breast exists», then, which would suggest a preformed (albeit indefinite) image of the breast. The image of the unconscious calm sea which we have evoked might lead to confusion. But we insist on the concept that the image of the *unconscious calm sea* is a phenomenon which occurs at birth. The foetus, instead, realizes a primordial internal possibility of libido and object relation via the qualities of the object.

The concept of projection into the external environment of an internal image at birth should not be taken into consideration. The mechanism of introjection and projection begins to operate after the upsurge of the death instinct which provokes the newborn infant's first *fantasy* and the concurrent transformation of libido from the inner realization of libidinal possibilities into libido which invests human reality with interest (intuition) and which desires.

And thus the *concept of desire* emerges. Desire as the libidinal possibility of post-natal tending towards the object. Memory trace of the qualities of the object (amniotic fluid and intra-uterine environment). The conceptualization is directed towards identifying the existence of *a drive realization* (sexual investment) and attraction towards (desire) and not towards images or objects or ideas projected onto the breast. The memory trace of the

preceding object does not derive from the introjection of an image (the baby is blind in the uterus) but from a postnatal internal creation which cannot be projected to form, on the outside, an "idea of the breast".

It is a realization of *receptivity* and of possibility, of libido. It is this realization which constitutes the "presentiment". A realization of libido or *tending towards*. The disappearance fantasy-death instinct at birth, a direct drive against (rendering non-existent) is *transformed* (bringing into existence) by this libidinal self (the material experience of a direct contact with the amniotic fluid). It is controlled, checked in its absolute extreme of removing the object, and takes the form of the possibility of moving the object just far enough away to be able to realize and maintain a relation with it. The possibility, in other words, of discerning the object which, in turn, makes relationship possible and hence an identification from it. A proper distance makes it possible to have an exchange with the object, to be at the same time similar and autonomous. That the words "to identify oneself" mean, at the same time, to be like and to differentiate oneself from the other, is certainly significant.

1 S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Standard Edition, vol. XVIII, p. 36.

2 I leave these two terms coupled in order to illustrate the process of the research [...].

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